

NEW PUBLICATIONS

MISS LICKINSON'S WHAT ANSWER?
WHAT ANSWER! BY ANNA E. DICKINSON, 12mo, pp. 22.
Doubleday & Fiske.

In a series of impassioned sketches rather than in an artistic plot, the author of this story pleads the cause of freedom with the bold and fervid eloquence by which she has won such eminent distinction in another field of public effort. The motive of her volume is the illustration of political equality. She demands for the colored race the same rights which are enjoyed by every American citizen. Even their social position she would leave to the natural workings of sympathy and affection rather than to arbitrary control or legislative rule. The capacity of the negro for all the requirements of civilization is a cardinal article of her creed, and she avers herself with the unfeigned enthusiasm of knightly times to battle with the prejudices that have kept him in a degraded caste. The heroine of her story is a maiden of the noblest stamp, richly endowed by nature with every delightful quality, and possessing all the accomplishments that ample wealth and liberal culture can bestow, but unfortunately tainted with the slightest trace of African blood. In the course of events, she attracts the attention of a young New Yorker of proud family and exclusive social relations, whose heart she soon wins, but not until after a long struggle is she persuaded to jettise his love. The effervescence occasioned by the discovery of this attachment may easily be imagined. Nor does the course of their true love at any time specially run, and ends at last in a pathetic tragedy. In the construction of the plot, Miss Dickinson punishes an earthly method, with none of the more sentimental and enterprises which form the stock in trade of practical novelists; the point at which she aims is evident from the commencement of the story, and the incidents by which it is developed succeed each other in inevitable order to present any powerful stimulus to curiosity. The dialogue presents many dramatic situations of interest, and is conducted with no little energy;

but the skill of the writer is chiefly shown in the numerous episodes which she makes subservient to the main purpose of her work, and on which she has bestowed a truly masterly power of description. As a specimen of this, we may give her recital of the starting of Fort Wagner under the lead of the Fifty-Fourth regiment of Massachusetts:

"This talc to a place late in the afternoon, near the headquarters of the commandant, and the band of drummers and fifes, and for the work of the evening, and for a bayonet, or perhaps up a rifle others to catch, and over the shanties and to lay plans for the morrow.—So here a soldier was for the first time to own his name, and to be known to his comrade in arms, and to name him, making what calculation he might, be a final farewell—For the night impending was to be a fierce one—we to read a chapter in a little book carried from some quiet quiet, melancholy service, perhaps, of the command of the call of the Great Captain to meet us up there."

Through the whole afternoon there had been tremendous commotion in the fort from the guns and the hand-bells, the bugles, and the drums, and beat him till his bones were lit with blood, and he had blazed and imagined

succumbed to the handful of police who stood helpless before the howling crew, now numbering thousands, with voices louder and more insidious than those of screeching lizards, whose mocking sneers,

"To break the sleep of pain.

I can but own my life is vain.

A desert void of peace;

I missed the goal I sought to gain,

I missed the measure of my brain,

That all my efforts were in vain,

And bids Earth's tumult cease.

Myself! alas! for them so poor

A theme but rich in Fear;

I stand a wretch on Earth's shore,

A spectre not within the door,

A houseless shadow moreover,

An exile lingering here.

This is better both in rhyme and reason than most of the contents of the volume, which is made up of sonorous rhapsodies in which prose takes the form of poetry without its spirit.

Instruction.

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The Critic will be glad to receive as specimens as usual.

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